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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU®

THE DEADLY RETURN OF
ZARAN
THE WEAPONS MASTER!



ZECK/RUBINSTEIN

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my *father* did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to *honor* him would bring nothing but *dishonor* to the spirit of my name.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

WARRIORS OF THE GOLDEN DAWN



"POSING AS MIND-CONTROLLED ZOMBIES, TARR AND I BOARDED A PLANE FILLED WITH THOSE UNDER MY FATHER FU MANCHU'S THRALL. WE THUS ESCAPED THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE TO LIMA...

"...THEN SLIPPED ONTO A COMMERCIAL FLIGHT BOUND FOR MOROCCO..."



DOUG MOENCH
WRITER

MIKE ZECK
PENCILER

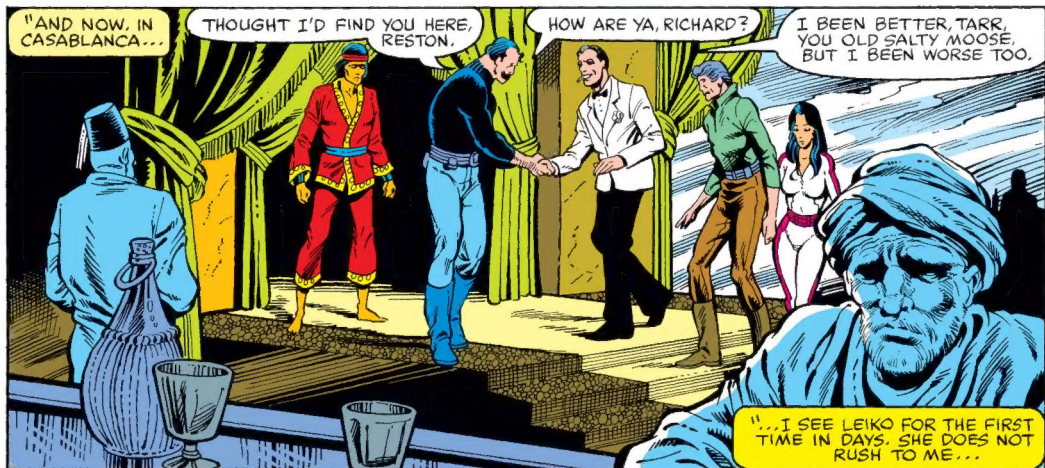
GENE DAY
INKER

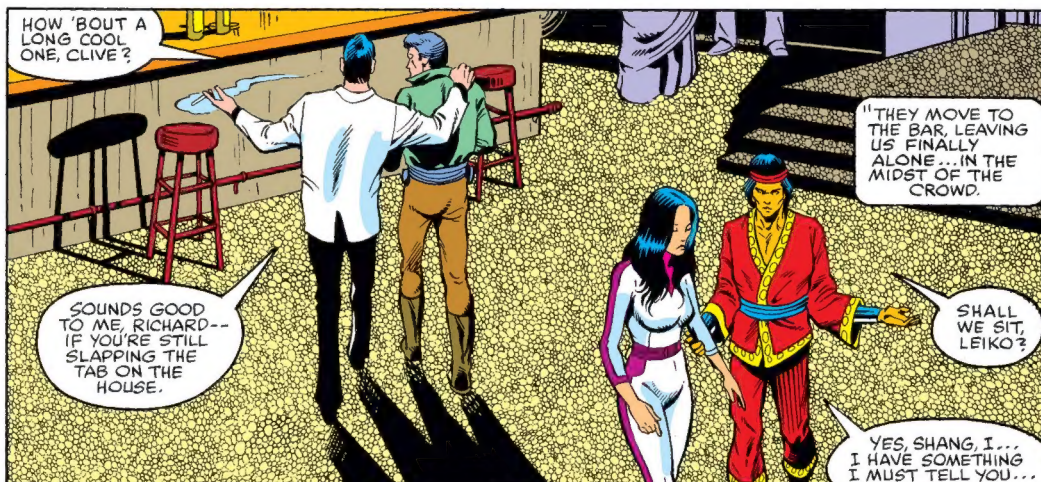
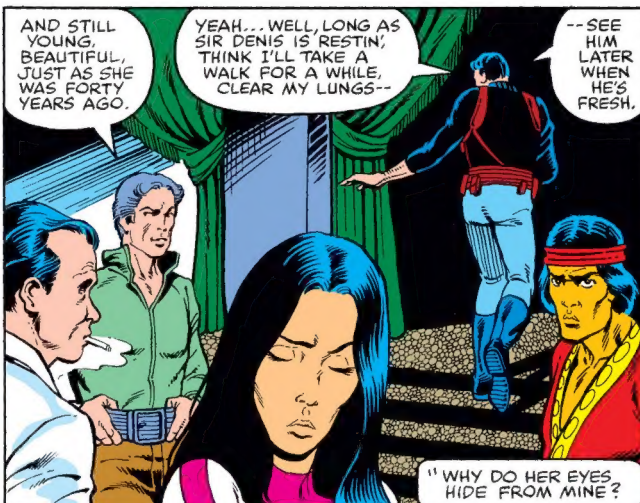
JOE ROSEN
LETTERER

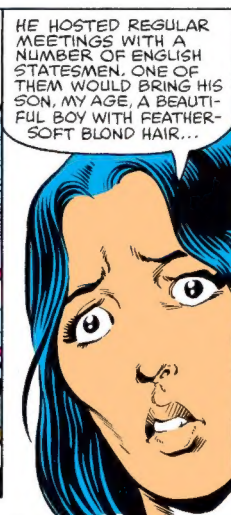
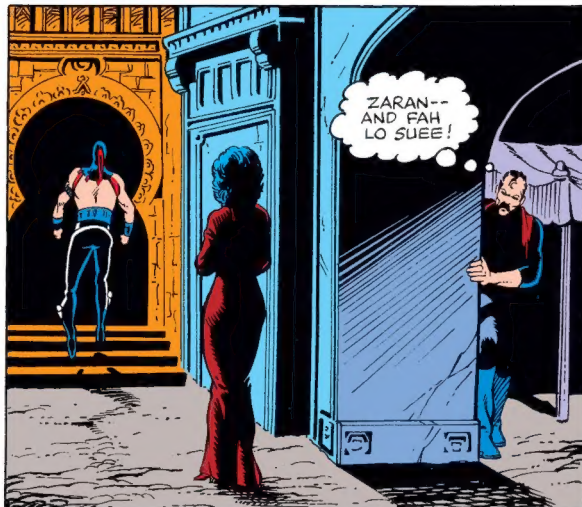
BOB SHAREN
COLORIST

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF







THEN HIS FATHER WAS ASSIGNED CULTURAL ATTACHÉ TO TAIWAN, AND HE WAS GONE.

STRANGE THAT HE SHOULD GO TO CHINA AND I SHOULD REMAIN IN LONDON, BUT SUCH ARE THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD, AS MY FATHER SAID.

I NEVER SAW THAT BEAUTIFUL BOY AGAIN.

FOR ANOTHER 12 YEARS, I THOUGHT I FELL IN LOVE TIME AND AGAIN... BUT I NEVER FELT THAT FEELING OF THE GOLDEN RAINBOW...

BLACK JACK TARR!

YEAH, FANCY MEETIN' *YOU* HERE, FAH LO SUEE. YOU MUST'VE LEFT SOUTH AMERICA SAME TIME ME AND YOUR BROTHER DID. NOW WHAT'RE YA UP TO?

TRYIN' TO KIDNAP SIR DENIS AGAIN?

THEN I MET... CLIVE... AND I THOUGHT I FELT IT AGAIN. MAYBE I REALLY DID, FOR A WHILE... BUT I HADN'T YET MET *YOU*, SHANG.

AND... WITH *YOU*, THERE'S NO DOUBT. I *DO* FEEL THAT 12 YEAR OLD'S GOLDEN RAINBOW.

I FEEL A TRUE MAGIC,

I LOVE YOU, SHANG,

I DO,

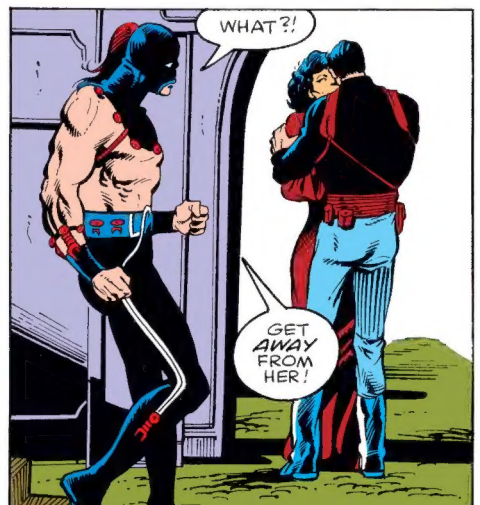
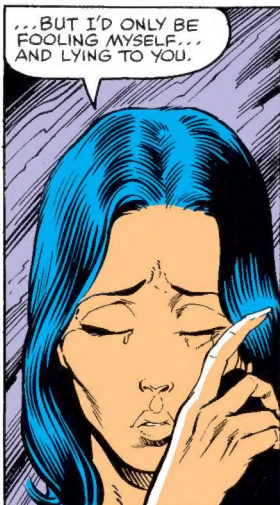
PUT THE GUN DOWN, BLACK JACK TARR. YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND.

I UNDERSTAND, AWRIGHT. YOU TWO-FACED VIXEN.

YOU THINK I COULD FORGET HOW YOU'VE TRICKED ME TIME AND AGAIN?

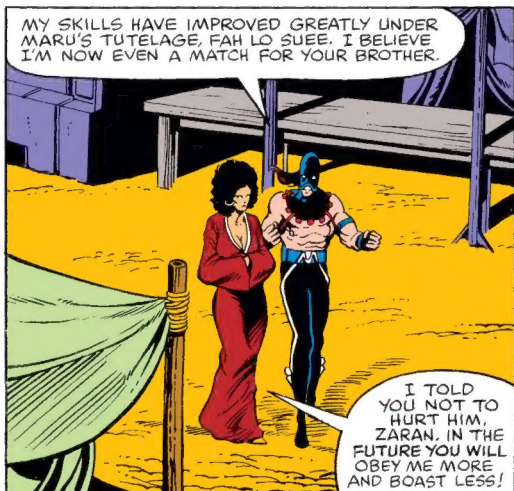
NOR CAN YOU FORGET MY EYES, BLACK JACK TARR... THE SPELL OF GOLDEN DREAMS DWELLING DEEP WITHIN MY EYES...

I DON'T WANT... I... CAN'T... CAN'T... YOUR... EYES...

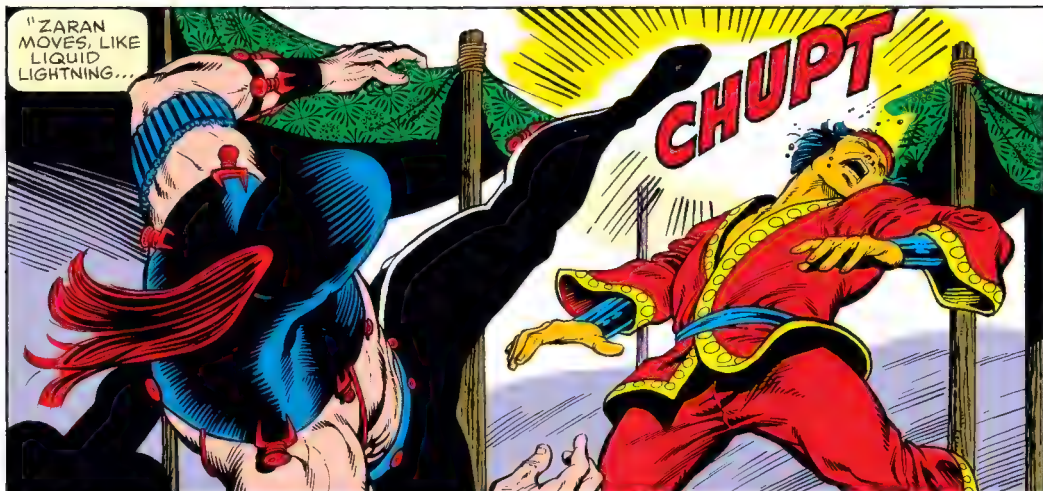


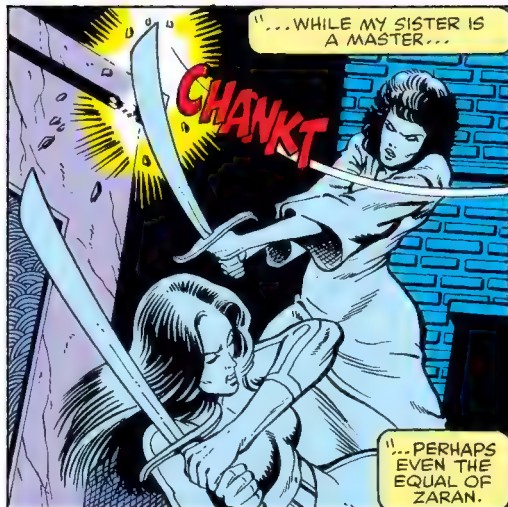


















YOU HAVE LIED BEFORE. WHAT PROOF HAVE WE THAT--

PROOF? THAT I ENGINEERED SMITH'S ESCAPE THROUGH MY ALLY HERE IN CASA-BLANCA IS MORE THAN ENOUGH PROOF!

WHAT?!



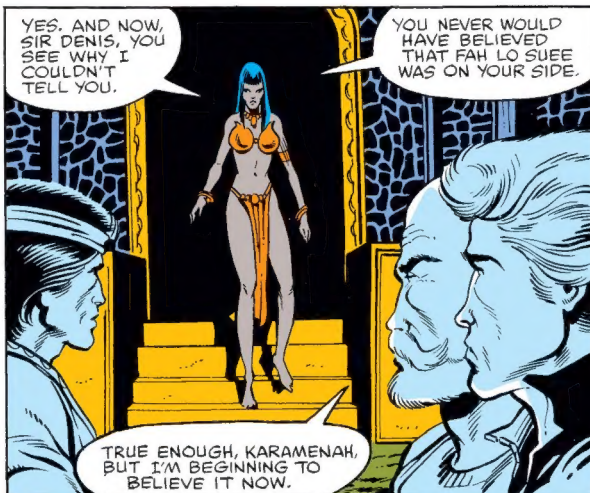
SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, LAD, SHE MUST BE.

YES, IT HAD TO BE YOU, FAH LO SUEE...



I SEE THAT NOW, QUITE CLEARLY. NO ONE ELSE COULD HAVE FREED KARAMENAH FROM FU MANCHU'S GRASP... SO SHE COULD FREE ME.

KARAMENAH--?!



YES, AND NOW, SIR DENIS, YOU SEE WHY I COULDN'T TELL YOU.

YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED THAT FAH LO SUEE WAS ON YOUR SIDE.

TRUE ENOUGH, KARAMENAH, BUT I'M BEGINNING TO BELIEVE IT NOW.

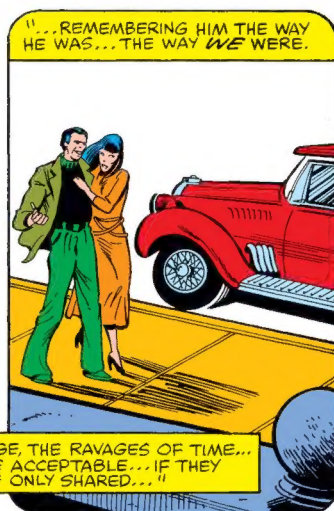
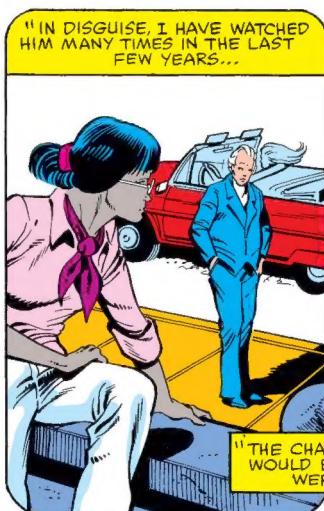
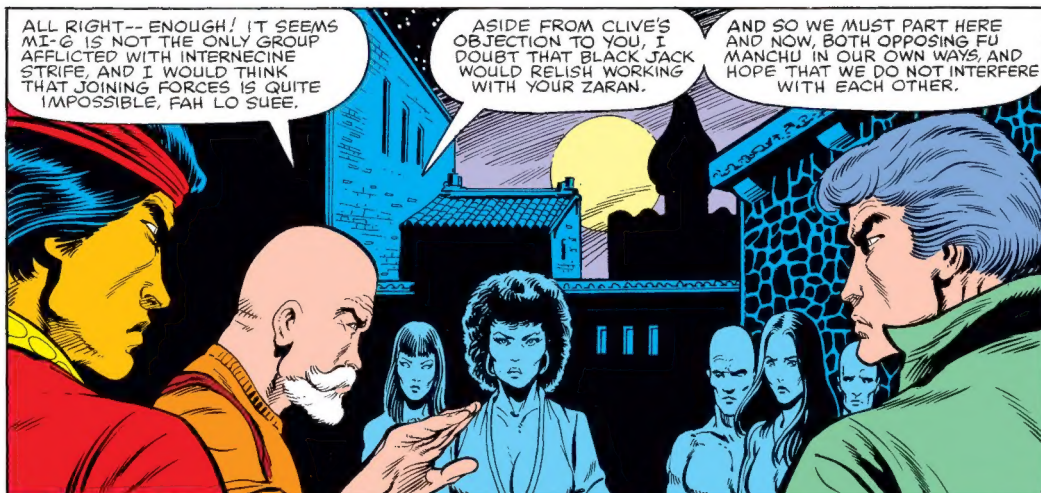


THEN HEAR ME, SMITH-- FU MANCHU WILL BE IN NEW YORK TOMORROW. I AM TO MEET HIM AT PIER 23. I DO NOT KNOW THE DETAILS, BUT HE PLANS TO SOMEHOW "DESTROY THE CITY"-- THOSE WERE HIS WORDS. PERHAPS IF WE JOIN FORCES--

WHAT?! TEAM UP WITH YOU?!

THAT'D BE A COLD DAY DOWN BELOW!

I STILL REMEMBER THE SPIDERS, FAH LO SUEE, THE SPIDERS YOU SET ON ME! YOU'VE GIVEN ME NIGHTMARES FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!!



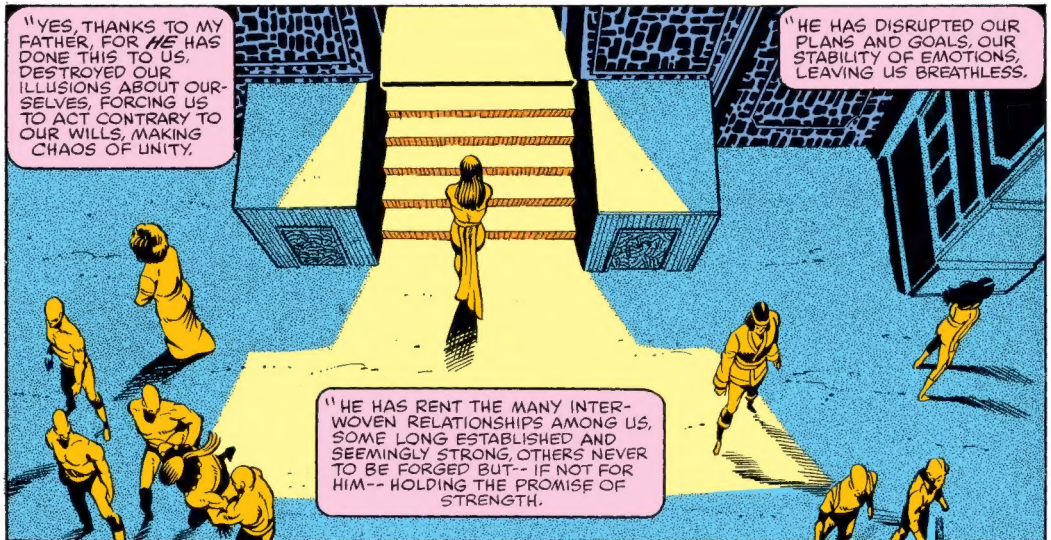


I...TRIED TO APPROACH HIM A DOZEN TIMES, BUT NEVER COULD, NEVER WILL, NEVER CAN... WHAT COULD I SAY TO HIM? NEITHER OF US ARE THE SAME NOW, THANKS TO FU MANCHU...

HIS ELIXIR OF YOUTH HAS KISSED MY LIPS... WHILE AGE HAS SPAT UPON MY LOVER...



AHEM. YES, WELL. I SUPPOSE THIS IS THE END OF IT THEN, FOR NOW. TIME TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. COME ALONG CLIVE.



"YES, THANKS TO MY FATHER, FOR ~~HE~~ HAS DONE THIS TO US, DESTROYED OUR ILLUSIONS ABOUT OURSELVES, FORCING US TO ACT CONTRARY TO OUR WILLS, MAKING CHAOS OF UNITY.

"HE HAS DISRUPTED OUR PLANS AND GOALS, OUR STABILITY OF EMOTIONS, LEAVING US BREATHLESS.

"HE HAS RENT THE MANY INTERWOVEN RELATIONSHIPS AMONG US, SOME LONG ESTABLISHED AND SEEMINGLY STRONG, OTHERS NEVER TO BE FORGED BUT-- IF NOT FOR HIM-- HOLDING THE PROMISE OF STRENGTH.



"SOME WILL BE MENDED... OTHERS MAY FALL INTO DEEPER STRIFE. I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT WITH ENOUGH TIME MY RELATIONSHIP WITH LEIKO WILL BE ONE TO MEND...

"... HOPE THAT, DESPITE THE LONG REACH OF MY FATHER'S ALMOST PRETERNATURAL HAND... LOVE WILL HEAL THE WOUND BETWEEN OUR EYES.

"BUT NOT NOW... NEVER NOW."

NEXT: NEW YORK CITY-- AND THE MENACE OF MARU!

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDIANSKY
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Doug and Mike,

Back in the early sixties, I was introduced to comics at a very early age and it was an instant love affair. As I grew, my feelings for comics never diminished and I would often hear the question, "Why don't you write to the comics and tell them how you feel?" Finally, when I couldn't think of any more excuses, I began my semi-letterhack career in college.

But after letters to a few dozen publications, I was forced to temporarily lay off. The elements forcing that decision are too complex to go into here; suffice it to say that even real people face moments of decision in their lives.

As the crisis passed, and now out of college, I contemplated a second round of correspondence. But the questions I now heard had a much different ring. "Why in the world do you still read comicbooks?" With each passing month, that question became more and more difficult to answer. Nevertheless, I've come back.

But I've come back a lot angrier than ever before. I look at an industry where writers can't last a dozen issues on the same title, and the artists even fewer. I see more and more titles featuring the word "adult" in their come-ons, yet very rarely living up to the claim. I've watched as DC, once the world's greatest comics company, made decision after incredibly shortsighted decision, losing its number one status to Marvel, then progressively getting even worse. Finally, when it looked as if it were starting to shake itself out of lethargy, its line was gutted by the new owning corporation. These things make me furious.

So why am I choosing MASTER OF KUNG FU to voice my opinions? Because throughout its tenure, it's been a shining example of what comics can and should be. It's had relatively stable writer-artist teams. It is truly adult in its approach, with plenty of action to attract the younger set. And while it sprang from a trend, it has long outlasted the craze that spawned it.

Greatness in a series is not judged by a single episode, but by consistency. In the case of MOKF, Doug, you've achieved a level of greatness rarely seen in any medium.

In my first round of letter-writing, I wrote to get published. Now I'm writing because I care about an American institution that's given me a great deal of pleasure through the years. It's been a good friend and I'm not about to turn my back on it now. There are those who say that the only comics fans left are those in it for financial speculation, along with those crazy ones who live, eat, and breathe comics — the sharks and their victims. They're wrong, but it's easy to see how they got that idea.

I've written a lot of letters to a lot of titles. This one was for me, to remind me of why I even bother. It's art and imagination, wildly expressed. There's precious little of that left nowadays. In a field where the word "great" is often abused, I want to thank you, Doug, for a truly great series.

Larry Lisowski
6333 Chimney Rock #102
Houston, TX 77081

Dear Doug,

The usual song of praise, eh? Okay, all together now: MOKF #80 IS GREAT! YOU WRITE GOOD, ZECK DRAWS GOOD, DAY INKS GOOD; HURRAY FOR YOU!

In particular, your increasing interest in overlapping captions and sound effects, Zeck's delicate homage to all the overhead camera shots in the history of comics (did I say "delicate"?... I meant to say "ka-razy!"), Day's precision inking, and the return of the Si-Fan made this issue a joy to read.

No, I am not uncritical, never that, so can I mention the doubts I had? I doubted the reality of the opening scene wherein Chi listens to loud music and Tarr is uptight. Frankly, it felt like a set-up for the neat interchange between Tarr and Reston re: Chi's father... almost as if *that* bit (and it was clever!) came to you first and you had to find a scapegoat, a straight man, to play it out. Tarr was the obvious choice, of course, but I was surprised to see him acting like that. After all, the bloke *does* collect Frazetta posters; he's not a total stranger to the outre manifestations of pop culture. So his outrage was *unexpected*, something that rarely happens in this series, where every character is

as real as you or me. Mind you, I'm not objecting to the change in Shang-Chi. That's okay; I sense it will form the basis for some interesting future events. It is the change in Tarr I find disconcerting. We do not need another Ben Grimm/Nick Fury type.

Otherwise the issue shines. The intercuts are magnificent. You are exploring new territory here — at least I have never seen this technique used in such depth or with such consistency in comicbooks.

The plot deserves a paragraph, too. You seem to do best with hardcore spy/mystery storylines, ones which have been plotted well in advance and unfold with an economy of movement rarely seen in modern comics (more's the pity), and this one looks good so far.

As usual, I can only close by saying that MOKF is without a doubt the most interesting comic now being published. Keep it up, Doug; we are all waiting for the next issue... and the next... and the next...

Cat Yronwode
Rt. 1, Box 287
Willow Springs, MO 65793

As usual, Cat, thanks — but let's rebut your objections to Tarr's behavior. If indeed Tarr's reaction was unexpected (in a sour-note sense rather than merely surprising), then Doug did indeed hit the wrong key and he'll accept the rap — but he contends that the wrong key had nothing to do with Tarr's dislike of loud music. Indeed, Doug is always rather bemused when, after presenting a new side of a character (a trait he had always assumed implicitly but which had not been explicitly detailed), the reader resistance proves to be so strong — even from highly perceptive readers like you, Cat. It is as if the previously shown aspects of the character's personality constitute an absolute limit to further development. This line of thinking seems to dictate, for example, the following logic: We've never seen Tarr dislike heavy rock in the past, so he can't dislike it now. But why not? In the course of all the previous stories, Tarr has never had occasion to *hear* heavy rock, so where's the inconsistency?

Furthermore, we know many people who love Frazetta and hate rock. The two are not necessarily indispensable adjuncts of one another.

Finally, the bit that "came to Doug first"... actually, the story needed an opening scene in which Chi is recovering from the previous issue's illness. Something passive. Meditation would've been fine, and entirely in character, but it had been done many times before. Why not add something to it, something that would both remain consistent with Chi's character and develop it further at the same time. Listening to music fit the bill perfectly — a natural "passive activity" for recuperation from illness. Now, Chi is obviously Doug's counterpart in certain ways — which is why Chi has previously gotten off on Fleetwood Mac, the only "new" rock group since Traffic that has truly excited Moench. But... time to take Chi a step further — into true rock. The Stones (and the Beatles in a more sublime way) have always been Doug's favorite group, and the Jagger line, "Make every song your favorite tune," has always struck him as being very zen-like, a sentiment to which Chi would naturally respond. And since Doug's father has always *hated* the Stones — with a crusty personality much like Tarr's — the rest came verbatim from past experience. The final "father-connection" fell into place on its own, quite serendipitously. After all, the next scene would deal heavily with Chi's father. So: The Tarr/Reston interchange was actually the *last* bit that came to Doug. How 'bout that, huh? And the next bit coming to you is the penultimate chapter of our current Fu Manchu saga, and it's a stunner. Be here!

